

Marion County Council on Aging continues providing 'meals on wheels' and other services to seniors

By NAEEM MCFADDEN
Staff Writer

Edna Rogers, executive director for the Marion County Council on Aging, said the organization has been active since 1973. "Our services are available to seniors 60 years old or older in Marion County," Rogers says. Some of the services provided include information and referral, case management, congregate meals, homebound meals and in-home services, as well as transportation to the three centers in the county for dining and recreational activities.

"We have three centers in Marion County. One is the Council on Aging, which is behind the museum on Dozier Street. The other is in Mullins on Gapway Street at the Mullins Recreation Center. Then there is another in Britton's Neck at the Bethel Church Fellowship Hall," says Rogers.

Rogers is assisted by a paid staff and volunteers, totalling 25 members, and says the organization could always use more volunteers. For those interested, just making a quick visit to the office on Dozier Street and speaking with Rogers, she'll be sure find the best position to make a difference, even if it's just a few hours during the week.

The Council on Aging is a non-profit organization that serves around 80 individuals per day in its congregate centers and 90 meals daily for the homebound. Gaining access to the rural areas of the county to provide the meals isn't an easy task because safety concerns makes it virtually impossible to provide hot meals at the right temperature. However, the organization remains able to provide safe and nutritional meals to residents in rural areas.

"We had so many request for the

homebound meals in the rural areas, we went to frozen meals," Rogers said. The organization delivers those meals Tuesday through Friday to the rural areas, reaching all sections of the county. For the individuals who are served on the rural routes, upon arrival, the organization delivers a total of five meals to cover the week. "Our menu is designed by a registered nurse on staff in Columbia, and she makes sure that the nutrients are

in each meal that the person is needing to get their one-third daily requirements," says Rogers.

The Marion and Mullins congregate meal centers are open five days a week, while the center at Bethel Church meets one day a week every Wednesday. "Senior Catering" out of Bennettsville handles the preparation and serving of meals at the centers. The organization also has a physical fitness program at the Wat-

sonia Recreation Center on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Tuesday and Friday afternoons, Mullins holds the exercise program at the recreation center on Gapway. The social hour for fitness and games also takes place at the Bethel Church on Wednesdays. Currently the organization is holding a wellness class at the church for the next six weeks.

"There is something going on all the time if people would just take advantage of it," Rogers said, adding that she would like to increase the participation level. In fact, chiropractor, Dr. Jeremiah Kelly with the Marion Chiropractic Center makes a weekly visit to help with the exercise and provides useful diet tips. Various health professionals come in to cover a number of health topics and give seniors an opportunity to take advantage of related medical screenings.

The importance of an organiza-

tion like the M.C. Council on Aging shouldn't go unnoticed, considering the various issues that affect seniors young and old, along with the "baby boomers."

"It's like preventive medicine," says Rogers of the programs offered. "You know if you keep exercising and eating the right kinds of foods, you're going to be well versus that person over there that never exercises. The more active you can be, the better off you'll be."

Rogers was the first person hired to the council and remains, to this day, committed to helping others.

"It's just a good social outlet for people to come in, share a meal, play bingo, and enjoy the programs and activities," Rogers says of the experience.

For information, call the Marion County Council on Aging at (843) 423-4391.

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